

The Saturday Gazette.

BLOOMFIELD AND MONTCLAIR.

WILLIAM P. LYON, Editor and Proprietor.
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Bloomfield, N. J.

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THE SATURDAY GAZETTE, BLOOMFIELD AND MONTCLAIR.

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April 18-ly

OUR ROADS.

[NOTE.—A meeting of the voters of Road Improvement District, No. 1, in the township of Montclair, was held on the evening of February 23, 1874, to consider an application that had been made for the improvement of certain roads and streets in said township, by the use of gravel.

After listening to the statements that were made, it appeared, to the voters present, that before authorizing the large expenditure that would be required to complete the work, it would be proper to obtain fuller information as to the comparative merits of different methods of road-making; and, after voting down the petition that was before them, they appointed a Committee to examine into the subject, and to report the facts and information which they might obtain to a subsequent meeting which they were authorized to call.

This Committee, after completing their investigations, called a meeting, which was held on Friday evening, May 6th, 1874, at which they made the following interesting and valuable report.—PUB.]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON ROAD IMPROVEMENTS, MONTCLAIR.

The Committee, appointed for the purpose of examining as to the merits of different plans for the improvement of roads, endeavored to obtain the best and most trustworthy information, bearing upon the subject, by visiting and inspecting roads constructed according to the most approved methods, by personal interviews with those who by practical experience or by their official position and connection with the construction and maintenance of roads, were most competent to give them the desired information, and also by a careful examination of such books and reports relating to the subject, as they were able to consult.

It is not considered necessary to refer particularly to the disadvantages of the present roads, for they are a subject of general complaint.

No one can use them without being keenly alive to their defects, and to the comfort and convenience that would come from their being kept uniformly hard and smooth at all times.

It is believed that on this point there is no difference of opinion, and that the only question for consideration is as to the best method for making roads that shall be thoroughly good at all seasons of the year, and in all kinds of weather.

FOUNDATION.

In noticing the points which distinguish good roads, the first in the order of their construction, and one of the most important in its effects upon the subsequent stages of the work, is that a road which is at all times hard, dry and smooth, is invariably built upon a dry and solid foundation.

To this rule there are no exceptions, and in the nature of things, there cannot be. It matters not how good the surface materials may be, nor with what skill they may be used; it is the subsoil on which the roadway rests, that must sustain the weight, not only of the travel which is to pass over it, but also that of the roadway itself; and it is, therefore, apparent that a road cannot be kept uniformly and surely supported.

If the foundation be spongy or yielding, the roadway will have a constant tendency to sink by its own weight; the passage of loaded vehicles will cut it up into ruts, and the motion of one part against another, whenever the road is used, will gradually reduce the surface to a mass of loose materials.

It is for this reason that a good foundation is a matter of primary importance, and that the success of all subsequent work depends largely upon it. For this purpose there can be nothing better than a bed of dry, solid earth, secure or protected against the approach of water, and the first efforts of road-builders are directed towards finding a natural road-bed of that character, or forming one by artificial means.

If the natural soil supplies all that is necessary in that respect, there is little to do but to shape it, preparatory to putting upon it the covering materials which may have been selected. But, if to any degree it is spongy, or retentive of moisture, or so situated that it is liable to receive the wash of adjoining lands, it is essential that provision should be made to carry off the water; for, unless this be done, the best results cannot be secured.

DRAINAGE.

So important is this considered by practical road-builders, that there is nothing which they insist upon with greater emphasis than upon drainage, as an essential part of the necessary preparation for building a thoroughly good road.

A writer in the "Agricultural Report" for 1866, says: "The point in which more than in any other, highways are defective in this country, is in being wet at the foundation, and the first thing to be attended to in their construction, is thorough drainage."

Another writer, Mr. Herschel, civil engineer of Boston, says: "With a perfect sub-drainage, the waters from a heavy no water to act upon within the body of the road, is robbed of its great power to destroy the same, and it also prevents the surface from becoming soaked, and thence destroyed in the summer."

Macadam, the originator of "macadamized" roads, wrote: "It is the nature of the soil which supports the weight of the traffic; that, while it is preserved in a dry state, it will carry any weight without sinking; that this nature of soil must be previously made quite dry, and a covering impervious to rain must then be placed over it to preserve it in that dry state."

Mr. Penfield, another authority, writes: "No attempt at repairs must be made until great care has been bestowed on drainage; at a point so desirable in road-making, that any exertion in other respects will be fruitless, when this is attended to."

In fact, the evils attending a wet foundation are so well known, that there are no differences of opinion, or of practice con-

cerning them. Unless the wet places are properly drained, "the action of frost heaves and breaks up the road-way, rendering it nearly impassable in Spring, while the common expedient of applying more materials to the surface, and rounding it off, only makes the mud deeper."

It may be thought that so much care for drainage is unnecessary; but when it is remembered that the effect of too much moisture is to soften and loosen the soils, it will be perceived that to this cause the bad character of our roads is mainly attributable.

In the dry weather of summer, all but the immediate surface of the road is hard and solid, and if it can be kept in that condition, by drainage from below, and a waterproof covering from above, which will prevent the road bed from lasting forever, as it is the only covering that will need to be renewed.

COVERING, OR SURFACE, OF ROADS.

Next we have to consider the artificial covering, or surface, of the road.